

REPORT DETAILS

Report Submission Date

11/09/2019

Reported Company/Branch Information

City/State/Zip: United Kingdom)

Are you a Twitter User?

Yes

User Name

alekboyd

Inquiry Summary / Subject

Preserving content / data download

Country

United Kingdom

Details

Dear Data Protection Officer,

I would like to request two things:

- 1) for all content related to my verified account to be preserved for the time being;
- 2) to be able to download said content (tweets, retweets, photographs, videos, threads, moments, bookmarks, likes, notifications, direct messages, list of followers, list of following, and any other data offered for download to users in normal conditions).

My account was locked on 27 August. Less than 48 hours after it was permanently suspended.

I was never given the opportunity to recover my data between temporary lock and permanent suspension.

I was never informed by Twitter that failure to delete tweet that caused temporary lock would result in immediate suspension, without option to download my data.

I registered my Twitter account sometime in November 2008.

I obtained verified status on 27 September 2016.

Since 2008 and counting current one, there have been three episodes where Twitter has temporary locked my account. In the two previous instances issues were resolved almost instantly.

Thus far, Twitter has given the following reasons for suspension:

- Violating our rules against posting private information;
- publishing people's private information without consent;
- threatening to hack Twitter or other platforms in order to obtain someone's private information; and/or;
- posting intimate photos or videos taken or distributed without the subject's consent;
- Your account has been suspended and will not be restored because it was found to be violating Twitter's Terms of Service (<https://twitter.com/tos>), specifically the Twitter Rules (<https://twitter.com/rules>) against using hateful or sensitive content in your profile.

Please note that I have never posted what I consider as private information, but information that is already in the public domain.

Please note that I have never threatened to hack Twitter, or other platforms.

Please note that I have never posted intimate photos that are not already in the public domain.

Please note that at time of suspension my profile contained a selfie, a picture with the Dalai Lama, and the following text: "Equal opportunity exposé of corruption | Leaks: alekboyd at ProtonMail | DM | Block applied with total abandon | <https://infodio.com> | Consultant @kyctool"

I am a London-based, Spanish national, independent investigative journalist focusing on large scale corruption in Venezuela.

I have catalogued a tremendous amount of corruption through my Twitter account since registration in Nov. 2008. Many of the individuals and companies I have exposed over the years are either wanted, indicted, charged, arrested, or on the run in different jurisdictions around the world.

I know for a fact that law enforcement in different jurisdictions follow closely my publications on Twitter. Same applies to media, and other journalists.

My websites, written almost entirely in English, have been banned in Venezuela since early 2014. Venezuela's official language is Spanish.

In November 2014, my flat in London was broken into, my laptops stolen, my daughters threatened with sexual abuse. People thought to be my sources in Venezuela had their apartments raided, laptops / computers taken, and were suffered abuse at the hands of intelligence operatives connected to Nicolas Maduro's regime.

I would like Twitter to give me the chance to explain myself, and to be able to download all data associated to my account before deletion.

Reporter first name

aleksander

Reporter last name

boyd arregui

Email address

alek.boyd@gmail.com

Details

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Uploaded Files

1. twitter-hateful-sensitive-profile-dalai-lama-alekboyd.png
 2. twitter-hateful-sensitive-profile-dalai-lama-alekboyd.png
Reason 2
-

Follow-Up Notes

20/09/2019 8:51 AM

Could you please give an indication on whether this request is being dealt with?

25/09/2019 12:03 PM

More questions:

- how long until I can use my real name again (alekboyd), which will not change in the future, for a Twitter account?

- Why isn't there an index file among the files / folders that make part of the download package?

27/09/2019 5:55 PM

Twitter permanently suspended my account due to following reasons:

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The private information that Twitter argues posted is, I presume, the cell number of a (diplomatic) representative of a Venezuelan politician to the UK. The number was sent to me, by said representative, in the course of an email exchange.

There was no mention whatsoever, prior, during, or after, by the said individual that email exchange with me was "off the record", that is, it is not a reasonable expectation to be had -while communicating with an investigative journalist- that communications and details contained therein are secret, or private, unless explicitly requested.

In fact, the very same individual whose cell details were posted by me, replied on Twitter to a question I posed (<https://twitter.com/vanessaneumann/status/1146787950140755976>) regarding corruption (which is my field of work). Here's there's another reply, to one of my tweets: <https://twitter.com/vanessaneumann/status/1156113381331480576>

Therefore, there was ample time for this person to explicitly request that any email exchange, and details of said exchange, would have to be off the record, which never happened. This person subsequently threatened me, through Twitter DM.

Twitter, on the other hand, placed a temporary lock on my account, with the possibility of deleting the tweet that allegedly violated Terms of Service / rules. That is, had I decided to delete that tweet my account would not have been permanently suspended.

Twitter then claim that I was involved in "threatening to hack Twitter or other platforms in order to obtain someone's private information", an accusation that has no basis whatsoever.

Twitter also claimed that my profile contained "hateful or sensitive content", which is preposterous, considering that my background picture was a selfie that I took in 2014 with the Dalai Lama. The picture made its way around the world. Just Google it. My profile picture was a profile picture, and the text in my profile was: "Equal opportunity exposé of corruption | Leaks: alekboyd at ProtonMail | DM | Block applied with total abandon | infodio.com | Consultant @kyctool". How can that be considered "hateful or sensitive" is beyond me. Perhaps Twitter can provide me with an explanation in this respect.

Twitter took less than 48 hours to move from temporary lock to permanent suspension. In this time:

- Twitter never once tried to get my version of events;
- warned me that failure to delete tweet breaching ToS would result in permanent suspension without further recourse.

Based on the above, please explain reasons for permanent suspension of my account.

02/10/2019 9:42 AM

Twitter permanently suspended my account due to following reasons:

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Follow-Up Questions/Comments

24/09/2019 12:23 AM posted by Organization

Hello Aleksander,

Thank you for contacting us.

Our records indicate that you already have an open support case (0124962264). Please follow up on that case if you have any other questions.

Please note that your ticket will be closed after 14 days if we do not receive any further communication from you.

Sincerely,

Twitter Office of Data Protection
24/09/2019 6:15 AM posted by Reporter
Thanks for sending download link.

I have further questions:

1- file followers.txt contains numbers, rather than usernames. Same in following.txt. How am I supposed to convert nearly 48,000 numbers into usernames?

2- moments.txt file is incomplete. It just shows first tweet of each Moment created. Why?

3- The way in which the files and folders have been formatted makes it impossible to replicate how tweets appeared on my Twitter account timeline. That is, I have now a tweets.txt and separately folders with images, videos, etc. Please explain how can I rebuild the TL, as it was seen in my TL.

15/11/2019 4:50 AM posted by Organization
Hello Aleksander,

Thank you for your questions.

Twitter provides users with the possibility to download a machine-readable archive of information associated with their account as described here:
<https://help.twitter.com/en/managing-your-account/accessing-your-twitter-data>
When downloading your data following the steps in the Help Center article provided above, you receive your data in the standard format.

Twitter's private information policy states that you may not publish or post other people's private information without their express authorization and permission. We also prohibit threatening to expose private information or incentivizing others to do so. For more details, see: <https://help.twitter.com/en/rules-and-policies/personal-information>

Information about usernames can be found on our Help Center: <https://help.twitter.com/en/managing-your-account/twitter-username-rules>

Sincerely,

Twitter Office of Data Protection
15/11/2019 2:25 PM posted by Reporter
Dear Twitter Office of Data Protection,

Thanks for your reply.

I am baffled by your suggestion about the possibility of downloading my data: were I able to do so, I would have never bothered you with such requests. As of this writing, I am unable to follow the steps suggested here: <https://help.twitter.com/en/managing-your-account/accessing-your-twitter-data>

Reason being, my verified account was permanently suspended. I would like to reiterate that Twitter never gave me the chance to explain why I did not want to delete a presumably offending tweet. It placed my account in temporary lock on 27 August 2019, and less than 48 hours after it decided to permanently suspend my account.

I did not publish people's private information, and to the best of my recollection I have never used Twitter to threaten to expose private information or incentivise others to do so (though feel free to provide me with specific examples of such). My work is as an independent investigative journalist focused on corruption. A lot of those that might feel offended by information I have posted throughout the years on my Twitter account are subject to criminal probes in several jurisdictions; some are wanted and on the run, some have been indicted, charged and arrested.

As per using again my real name, upon permanent suspension, I registered a new account (@alekboyd2), which has also been suspended, without explanation.

Please allow me to recover all of my data in normal JSON format.

I should also be grateful if you could provide specifics as to your allegations that I have used Twitter to make threats, to harass, to threaten to hack, and, above all, why did Twitter claim in an email dated 30 August 2019 that my picture with the Dalai Lama and text in my profile could be considered "hateful or sensitive".

15/11/2019 5:39 PM posted by Organization
Hello Aleksander,

When an account is suspended, users can write to Twitter requesting their data. They receive the same archive that they would have otherwise been able to download via <https://help.twitter.com/en/managing-your-account/accessing-your-twitter-data>). Both files are the same machine-readable archive of information.

With respect to your inquiry about the suspension of the account, the Tweet with the ID 1157179133442560000 was found in violation of Twitter's private information policy (<https://help.twitter.com/en/rules-and-policies/personal-information>).

Please note that this case will now be closed. If you would like to appeal an account suspension, you may submit an appeal submitting the following form:
<https://help.twitter.com/forms/general?subtopic=suspended>

Sincerely,

Twitter Office of Data Protection

Chat Transcripts

There are no chat transcripts for this incident.